

UGM Rector: Human Behaviour and Artificial Canals Cause Forest Fires

Wednesday, 21 October 2015 WIB, By: Marwati




The ongoing forest and peat land fires in Sumatera and Kalimantan islands have concerned many people, including Rector of Universitas Gadjah Mada, Prof. Ir. Dwikorita Karnawati, M.Sc., Ph.D. According to Dwikorita, the almost annual fire should have been able to be prevented and controlled under the condition that the government and authorities take a firm stance against the perpetrators. "It is ironic if we cannot stop the annual (man-made) disaster," said Dwikorita in her remarks during the inauguration of passing graduate students in Grha Sabha Pramana on Tuesday (20/10).

In her view, there are two factors that trigger the forest fires, being natural and human factors. But in this case, it is man that has caused the fires. "Opening land by burning the forest and the artificial canals to drain the peat land are the triggers of forest fires to take place," she said.

According to the Rector, these were the results of studies conducted by UGM team on the cause of forest and peat land fires. The team said the spread of hotspots are in line with the spread of artificial canals. "The canals being more open has triggered more hotspots," she said.

It is not easy to put out the fires in the peat land that stays under the surface between 1-3 meters-deep. A great deal of water is also needed to do the work. "It needs 200-400 litres of water to extinguish the land measuring 1 meter square and 30 cm deep. "Just imagine how much water is required to extinguish the fires affecting some 1.7 millions of hectares of forest," she said.



UGM has so far conducted an intensive study and recommends several points to government, including immediate action to extinguish the fires and impact handling, evacuation and victims handling. The UGM team has also recommended law enforcement and economic disincentives for perpetrators and corporations that are proven to have burned the forests. “It needs administrative sanctions such as permit revocation and recovery costs for those corporations proven guilty, also lawsuits to be charged for responsibility,” she confirmed.

For preventive measures, Dwikorita suggested the government to re-order the spatial arrangement of peat lands and audit canal performance, audit the performance and compliance of related stakeholders.

Related News

- [Land and Forest Fires are Preventable](#)
- [UGM and APHI Collaborate in Forest Fire Mitigation](#)
- [Chairman of Indonesian Disaster Experts Association: Ad-Hoc Agency Needed to Overcome Forest Fires](#)
- [UGM Disaster Observer: Forest Fires Expedite Climate Change](#)
- [UGM & Peatland Restoration Agency Cooperate to Prevent Forest Fires](#)